



State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives
403 Seventh Avenue North
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0312

HUNTSMAN, ADAM
(1786-1849)
PAPERS
1835-1848

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INTRODUCTION

The papers (photostats) of Adam Huntsman (1786-1849), lawyer, state senator (1827-1839), and congressman (1835-1837), were given to Tennessee State Library and Archives by Emma Inman Williams, Jackson, Tennessee, January 1950. Please note that the original materials in this collection are in the Library of Congress.

The materials in this finding aid measure ca. 50 items. There are no restrictions on the materials. Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Adam Huntsman Papers may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The papers of Adam Huntsman, 1835 to 1848, contain approximately 50 items. The content of the collection is entirely correspondence written by Adam Huntsman to his friends and political allies. The bulk of the letters were written to James K. Polk, then Governor of Tennessee. In these letters Huntsman has written entirely of politics, the progress of his party, and the campaigns of the candidates. Many of the letters refer to David Crockett, defeated by Huntsman in 1834. Other letters discuss the Texas question and abolition. Some letters in the collection were written in the form of petitions, usually to James K. Polk, while President of the United States, asking him to appoint certain persons to offices in the administration. One letter was written to General Andrew Jackson regarding a newspaper article that Huntsman found offensive. Some of the names mentioned in this letter are Judge White of Jonesborough, Tennessee, and Mr. O'Brien from Washington County. The majority of the letters were written from Jackson, Tennessee, where Huntsman resided.

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

Adam R. Huntsman

Lawyer and politician of Madison County, Tennessee; early settler in the county; U.S. Representative from Tennessee, (D-Jackson); colorful and unique figure – excellent speaker, forceful campaigner, distinguished wit, humorist and practical joker; nicknamed “Old Blackhawk” by a political opponent, David Crockett (1786-1836).

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|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1786 | February 11, born Charlotte County, Virginia; names of parents are not determined; attended elementary and secondary schools in Virginia |
| ca. 1807 | Moved to Knoxville, Knox County, Tennessee, where he studied law and was admitted to the bar |
| 1809 | Began practice of law at Monroe, Overton County; continued to practice in Overton County and surrounding areas until as late as 1821 |
| 1813 | Lost a leg in the Creek War |
| 1816 | Presidential elector on Republican (later Democratic) Party ticket of James Monroe and Daniel D. Tompkins |
| 1815, 1817 | Elected a member of the Tennessee State Senate, 11 th , 12 th and 13 th General Assemblies, Jackson, White and Overton counties |
| 1819 | Moved to Madison County (est. 1821) and settled in Jackson; bought and sold land on large scale, especially in West Tennessee; practiced law and was known as an able criminal lawyer, although more interested in politics than in his profession |
| 1821, 1822 | By acts of the Tennessee State Legislature, was appointed member of the board of commissioners for the town of Jackson; the commission had both administrative and legislative powers and made all necessary laws |
| 1824 | Appointed one of three commissioners to improve rivers of the Western District (this board accomplished little); member of a commission to build a turnpike in Madison County (several were built later) |
| 1825 | Member, committee to prepare for the visit of Gen. Andrew Jackson to the Western District; purpose of the visit was to rally the Democrats of the area |

- 1827, 1829 Elected member of the Tennessee State Senate, 18th and 19th General Assemblies, representing Fayette, Hardeman, Haywood, Madison, Shelby, and Tipton counties
- 1828 Compiled a report on the unappropriated land in the Western District; concluded that not more than half of these lands could be sold for 12½ cents per acre
- 1832 October, member of the board of commissioners to open the books of the Union Bank of the State of Tennessee for public inspection preparatory to the sale of stock
- 1830-1835 Political feud between Huntsman and David Crockett reached its height; in 1834, Huntsman was chosen by Andrew Jackson and the forces around him
as the only man who could best Crockett (he had lost to Crockett in previous elections); many colorful speeches were made on either side during a heated stump campaign
- 1834 Representative of the Western District of the Tennessee State Constitutional Convention; advocated a poll tax for whites to support public schools and advocated slavery, although he deplored the conditions under which Negroes lived
- 1835-1837 Elected U.S. Representative from Tennessee (D-Jackson), 24th Congress defeating incumbent, David Crockett, who soon left for Texas
- 1835-1838 From 1835 onward enjoyed a close political association with James K. Polk (1795-1849), as his frequent letters to Polk attest
- 1837-1848 Resumed practice of law and was an active campaigner for Tennessee Democratic candidates up until a year before his death – in the 1840 national campaign assumed leadership in the Western District for the Democratic Party; 1841, worked against the candidacy of Milton Brown (1804-1883) of Madison County, Whig candidate for U.S. Congress; 1842, participated in large-scale meeting between 600 Whigs and 300 Democrats in Jackson, etc.

1849 Died, buried in Old Salem Cemetery, Madison County; tombstones in the
graveyard show that he was married three times:
 Sarah (Wesley) Quarles, 1792-1825 (daughter of Judge William Quarles)
 Elizabeth , 1810-1843
 Nancy , 1789-1858
 Children, by which wife not indicated, were:
 America
 Adam, Jr.
 Patience
 George

Sources:

1. Overton County Court records transcribed by the Works Progress Administration
2. Madison County Court records transcribed by the Works Progress Administration
3. Emma Inman Williams. *Historic Madison: the Story of Jackson and Madison
County, Tennessee, from the Prehistoric Moundbuilders to 1917.* Jackson,
Tennessee: Madison Historical Society, 1946.
4. Draft of biographies of Tennessee State legislators being compiled by Dr. Dan
Robison, Tennessee State Library and Archives

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

Correspondence

1. undated
2. 1835-1837
3. 1838
4. 1839-1840
5. 1841
6. 1842-1843
7. 1844
8. 1845-1848